

An aerial night photograph of a city, likely San Francisco, showing a dense urban landscape with numerous illuminated buildings and streets. A prominent domed building, possibly the City Hall, is visible in the upper center. The city lights create a vibrant, colorful scene against the dark night sky.

# **Development Services Department Best Practice Survey Results**

Table of Contents	
Page 3	Executive Summary
<b>Page 4</b>	<b>Reduce Cycle Time - Overview</b>
Page 4	Benchmark – Reduce Average Cycle Time
Page 6	Best Practice – Reduce Cycle Time
<b>Page 9</b>	<b>Ensure Quality and Consistency of Inspections and Plan Review – Overview</b>
Page 9	Benchmark – Quality and Consistency (under development)
Page 9	Best Practices – Quality and Consistency
<b>Page 10</b>	<b>Enhance Customer Service Philosophy - Overview</b>
Page 10	Benchmark – Customer Service (collecting data)
Page 10	Best Practices – Customer Service
Page 12	FY 07 Proposed Program Improvements

## Executive Summary

Development Services Department surveyed Austin (AUS), Dallas (DAL), Fort Worth (FTW), Phoenix (PHX), and San Diego (SAN) to benchmark key performance measures and to discover best practices. With respect to performance measures, San Antonio major plat cycle time takes longer than the other cities. Plat activity is higher than the other cities and additional staffing will be required to improve cycle time. San Antonio's building plan review cycle time is competitive with the other cities with the exception of Dallas. Dallas' cycle time is the shortest since it has a comprehensive review at in-take and prevents incomplete plans from entering its tracking system. With respect to the cycle time for inspections, San Antonio's percent of inspections performed as scheduled is one of the lowest. However, the number of inspections performed per inspector per day is in-line or higher than the other benchmark cities. Of key interest is the cities' ISO rating\*. Overall, PHX had the best rating followed by San Antonio. Although San Antonio best practices are in-line or better than other benchmark cities, this summary focuses only on practices currently not performed by Development Services Department. The department will need to explore these practices with staff and key stakeholders.

**Platting** - all cities except for San Antonio utilize a preliminary plat process and three cities required preliminary plat review meetings (FTW, PHX, SAN). DAL, FTW, and SAN also required pre-Planning Commission meetings to resolve final issues. Any change to a preliminary plat/final plat process will not reduce cycle time due to staff shortages in the areas of drainage and storm water. With respect to storm water, four of the five-benchmark cities had storm water review responsibilities in Development Services Department. Best practices to be explored include: (1) mandatory preliminary plat review meetings to explain the process and advise customers of storm water review requirements, (2) expansion of case manager system to include training, and (3) a coordination committee program.

**One Stop Counter Services** – most cities indicated they have a “One Stop” counter. Best practices to be explored include: (1) review of building plan application documents at in-take, (2) one-on-one coaching for applicants, (3) extensive customer consultation services, (4) over the counter residential plan review, and (5) a small business assistance center.

**Building Plan Review** – all cities provide special services to reduce the number of plan re-submittals. Best practices to explore include: (1) create a new plan review team to perform initial plan review with the customer and all applicable plan reviewers – customers could be charged a fee for this service to support the additional staff; (2) mandatory preliminary plan review for certain projects (generally when fire and storm water reviews are required); (3) requirement for plan reviewers to be certified, an architect or an engineer; and (4) expand single plan review as an incentive to encourage submission of high quality plans – minor plan problems are red-lined and the customer does not need to re-submit corrections.

**Building Inspections** – of all the areas studied building inspectors metrics were the most consistent. The number of San Antonio's inspections/inspector/day was similar to AUS, FTW, and SAN but significantly higher than DAL and PHX. For example, PHX's inspectors perform 13 residential inspections per day, while San Antonio performs 23. Best practices for exploration include: (1) all combination inspectors for residential; (2) mandatory certification for inspectors; and (3) permit by inspection.

**Customer Service** – all cities surveyed place a high emphasis on customer service surveys and quality control programs. However, no cities could provide a survey or quality control score for benchmarking.

\*Insurance Service Rating

Reduce Cycle Time to Obtain Building Permit						
Definition	Total time to obtain a building permit (may include zoning and platting, if required)					
Goals	√ Shortest cycle time of the five benchmark cities √ Stakeholder satisfaction of metrics used and staff performance					
Critical Path	<b>Major Plats</b> – need to reduce City, SAWS, CPS technical review to 20 days √ Additional staff for drainage/storm water, street, traffic, historic √ Additional staff for SAWS and CPS <b>Customer</b> – need to improve customers’ submittal package √ Business Assistance Center will assist customers with understanding submittal requirements (goal: reduction of customer time)					
Reduce Cycle Time to Obtain Inspections						
Definition	Number of days for City staff to perform inspection					
Goals	√ Shortest cycle time of the five benchmark cities √ Stakeholder satisfaction of metrics used and staff performance					
Current Performance	85% of building, mechanical, electrical, and plumbing inspections performed as scheduled					
Benchmarking Average Cycle Time (Calendar Days)						
Activity	SAT	AUS	DAL	FTW	PHX	SAN
Number of Plats	693	350	350	550	279	535
Minor Plat Approval						
<b>Total City Time</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>15</b>
Total Customer Time	<u>75</u>	<u>70</u>	<u>76</u>	<u>60</u>	Not Avail	<u>65</u>
Total	99	110	90	81		80
		All Plats				
Major Plat Approval						
<b>Total City Time</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>30</b>
Total Customer Time	<u>163</u>	<u>70</u>	<u>166</u>	<u>105</u>	Not Avail	<u>150</u>
Subtotal	225	110	180	126		180
		All Plats				
New Residential - Plot Plans						
<b>Initial Review</b>	Not Avail	<b>13</b>	<b>N/A</b>	Not Avail	<b>1</b>	Not Avail
<b>Total City Time</b>		<b>20</b>			1	
Customer Time		<u>3</u>				
Total		23				
Residential Construction						
<b>Initial Review</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>N/A</b>	<b>N/A</b>	Not Avail	<b>62</b>	10
<b>Total City Time</b>			<b>2</b>		<b>90</b>	(6

Total Customer Time	8					Expedited)
<b>Benchmarking Average Cycle Time (Calendar Days)</b>						
<b>Activity</b>	<b>SAT</b>	<b>AUS</b>	<b>DAL</b>	<b>FTW</b>	<b>PHX</b>	<b>SAN</b>
Commercial Construction – Complex (over 50,000 sq. ft. or \$5MM in valuation) <b>Initial Review</b>	<b>24</b>	See All New Const. (Below)	<b>N/A</b>	Not Avail	<b>39</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>Total City Time</b>	<b>48</b>		<b>42</b>		<b>55</b>	
Total Customer Time	<u>59</u>		<u>0</u>			
Total	107		42			
Commercial Construction – Large (between 5,000 and 50,000 sq. ft. or over \$250,000 in valuation) – includes Site Plan Review <b>Initial Review</b>	<b>19</b>	See All New Const. (Below)	<b>N/A</b>	Not Avail	<b>38</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>Total City Time</b>	<b>53</b>		<b>35</b>		<b>55</b>	
Total Customer Time	<u>69</u>		<u>0</u>			
Total	122		35			
Commercial Construction – Small (under 5,000 sq. ft. or under \$250,000 in valuation) <b>Initial Review</b>	<b>10</b>	See All New Const. (Below)	<b>N/A</b>	Not Avail	<b>26</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Total City Time</b>	<b>20</b>		<b>21</b>		<b>42</b>	
Total Customer Time	<u>46</u>		<u>0</u>			
Total	66		21			
Commercial Construction – All <b>Initial Review</b>	<b>13</b>		<b>N/A</b>			
<b>Total City Time</b>	<b>25</b>	See All New Const. (Below)	<b>21</b>	Not Avail	Not Avail	Not Avail
Total Customer Time	<u>42</u>		<u>0</u>			
Total	67		21			
Commercial Construction – New Construction Only (No Interior Finish out, Additions, or Remodels) <b>Initial Review</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>15</b>	Not Avail	Not Avail	Not Avail	Not Avail
<b>Total City Time</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>23</b>				
Total Customer Time	<u>45</u>	<u>29</u>				
Total	80	54				
Percent of trade inspections completed as scheduled	86%	86%	99.5%	Not Avail	96%	95%
Percent of trade inspections completed within two days	100%	99%	100%	Not Avail	100%	100%

## Best Practices to Reduce Cycle Time

Activity	SAT	AUS	DAL	FTW	PHX	SAN
Activities under Development Services						
Zoning	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Platting	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Environmental Review	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No
Storm Water Review	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Parks Review	No	Yes	No	No	No	No
Public Utility Review	No	No	Yes	No	No	No
Building Plan Review	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Fire Plan Review	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	No
Bldg Codes Inspections	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Fire Code Inspections	No	No	Yes	No	No	No
Health Review and Inspections	No	No	Yes	No	No	No
Comprehensive Planning	No	No	No	No	No	No
Code Compliance (Property Maint)	No	No	No	No	No	No
Master Plan Required	Could	No	Could	Could	Could	Called
Preliminary Plat Review Required	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Mapping
Final Plat	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	
Preliminary Plat Review Meeting Required	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Pre-Planning Commission Meeting to Resolve Final Issues	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Case Managers						
Platting	Yes	Yes	No	?	No	Yes
Building Plan Review	Limited	No	No	No	No	Yes
Ombudsperson	Yes					Yes
Business Assistance Center	No	Yes	N/A	No	Yes	Yes
Project Team Leader	No	No	No	No	Yes	Yes
Plan Coordinators	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Plans Examiners In-takes Plans and Performs Quality Control Review	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Over the Counter Bldg Plan Review	Yes	Yes	90%	?	Yes	Yes
Permit by Inspection	No	No	No	No	Yes	No
Single Review	Limited	No	No	?	Yes	No
Self-Certification for Plan Review	Limited					Yes
After Hours Bldg Plan Review	Yes	No	No	No	No	Yes
After Hours Inspections	Yes		Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Number of Commercial Bldg Plans Required at In-Take	2	3	2	?	2	15
Dedicated Plan Review/Inspection Team to Serve a Unique Customer (Example: School Districts) or Custom Plans	Yes	Limited	No	Yes (Central City)	Yes	Yes (Outside dept)
Required License Engineer or Architect to be the Point of Contact for Large Projects	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Individual Bldg Plan Re-Submittals Accepted	No	?	Yes	?	Yes	Yes
Bldg Plan Review by Appointment	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Permit by Appointment	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Preliminary Site Plan Review	Yes	?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Preliminary Bldg Plan Review (Mandatory)	No	No	No	No	Yes Some Projects	No Encourage Appoint

## Best Practices to Reduce Cycle Time

Activity	SAT	AUS	DAL	FTW	PHX	SAN
Preliminary Bldg Plan Review (Optional)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes Some Projects	Yes
Require Approval of Site Development Plan Before Submission of Building Plan	No	No	No		Yes	Yes
Fast Track Permits						
Metal Stud	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	No
MEP Permits (tenant finish out)	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	No
Foundation Only Permits	Yes		Yes		Yes	Yes
Fire Alarm	Yes	?	No		No	No
Fire Sprinkler	Yes	?	No		No	No
Mechanical Limited Service & Repair	Yes	No	No		Yes	No
Downtown Minor Repair Permit	Yes	No	No		?	No
Annual Facility Repair Permit	Yes	?	No		Yes	No
Residential Plan Certification Option	Yes	N/A	No		No	Yes
Third Party Review of Bldg Plans						
Residential	No	N/A	No	Yes	Yes	Maybe
Commercial	Limited	Limited	No	Yes	No	No
Residential Plan Review Required	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Master Building Plan Permit	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Separate Performance Measures for Plot Plans and New Residential Construction	No	N/A	Yes		Yes	Yes
Conditional Bldg Permits	Yes	No	No		Yes	Yes
Phase Permits	Yes	Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes
Temporary Certificates of Occupancy	Yes	Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes
Partial Certificates of Occupancy	Yes		Yes		Yes	Yes
Require new Certificate of Occupancy for a Change in Building Occupant (not for a change in use)	Yes		Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Multiple Permit for Residential Projects	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Percent of Trade Permits Issued On Line	63%	0%	2%	0%	3%	?
Percent of Building Plan Applications Submitted On Line					(Pilot Program)	
Residential	61%	N/A	0	0	2%	Pilot
Commercial	0	0	0	0	0%	Prog
On-line Submittal of Bldg Plans						
Residential	No	N/A	No	No	No	Pilot
Commercial	No	No	No	No	No	Prog
Percent of Inspections Scheduled On Line	42%	30%	3.5%	0%	5%	0% (100% IVR)
Project Status Available On Line						
Plats	Yes	Yes	?	No	Yes	No
Zoning	Limited	Yes	?	No	No	No
Building Plan Review	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No
Inspections	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No
Automatic Notification of Staff Action						
Plat Approval/Hold Comments	Yes	No	?	No	No	Yes
Building Plan Approval/Comments	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	Yes
Inspection Pass/Fail	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	No
Combination Inspectors (Residential)	Limited	Yes (B/M)	Yes (P/M)	Yes (All)	Yes	Yes

## Best Practices to Reduce Cycle Time

Activity	SAT	AUS	DAL	FTW	PHX	SAN
Combination Bldg Plan Reviewer	Limited	No	No	No	Yes (Res)	Yes
Residential/Commercial Inspection Teams	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Special Inspection Program	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Educational Seminars for Customers	Yes	Limited	Limited	No	Yes	Yes
Customer Surveys	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Customer Services Audits by Staff	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	Yes
Technical Advisory/Steering Committee	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Stakeholder Focus Groups	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Coordination Committee	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Consolidated Planning & Zoning Commission	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No
Regular Staff Meetings each week						
Platting	Yes		?	Yes	Yes	
Zoning	Yes		?	Yes	Yes	
Counter	No		Yes/2	1/Mo.	Yes	
Plan Review	No		Yes/2	?	Yes	
Inspections	No		Yes/1	No	Daily	



Ensure Quality and Consistency of Inspections and Plan Reviews						
Definition	Uniformity in providing advice, reviewing plans, and inspecting projects					
Goals	Acceptable results from in-house quality control checks					
Current Performance	Recently implemented quality control program					
Benchmark - Quality and Consistency of Inspections and Plan Reviews						
Activity	SAT	AUS	DAL	FTW	PHX	SAN
Under Development						
Best Practices to Ensure Quality and Consistency of Inspections and Plan Reviews						
Activity	SAT	AUS	DAL	FTW	PHX	SAN
Staff uses a checklist to review plans	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Staff uses a checklist to inspect projects	No	No	No	No	Yes	Yes
Building Plan Reviewers are certified or have a degree in engineering or architecture	Limited	Yes	Limited	Yes (Architects)	Yes	Yes
Building Inspectors are certified or have a degree in engineering or architecture	Limited		Yes 90%	Yes	Yes	Most
Staff must be certified to pass probation, for promotion or special assignment	No	Required	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Formalized Quality Control Program	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Publish Information Bulletins	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Limited	Yes
Complaint Tracking System to document problems with inspections	No	No	Yes	No	No	Yes
Daily Workload Tracking of Inspections per Inspector	No	Yes	Yes	Yes (City only) 40% is 3 Party	Yes	Yes
Daily Workload Tracking of Building Plans Reviewed per Day by Plans Examiner	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Compensation Incentive for Certification	Yes \$50 – 1 <sup>st</sup> 5% 2+	No Required Certification	Yes 5-8% 3 max	Yes \$350/Cert Once/Yr	Yes Promotion	Yes No \$\$\$
Formalized Dispute Resolution Process for Plan Review Interpretations						
Zoning	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Platting	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Building Plans	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Track Staff Training Hours	No	Yes  (Formal train)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Average Number of Bldg Codes Inspections/Inspector/Day	Res – 23 Com - 16	Res-26 Com-12	10	Res-26 Com-19	Res-13 Com-8 Civil-7	20
Average Number of Building Plans Reviewed/Plans Examiner/Day	Not Avail	Not Avail	3	?	Res-2.6 Com-1.4 Civil-1.6	Not Avail

Enhance Customer Service Philosophy						
Definition	Staff has attitude of “It’s my job. How can I help you today?”					
Goals	Continuous Improvement in Customer Service					
Current Performance	Mayor’s Survey: 78% approval rating In-House Survey: 4.18 out of 5					
Benchmark - Customer Service Satisfaction						
Activity	SAT	AUS	DAL	FTW	PHX	SAN
Customer Survey Satisfaction Score	78%					
Quality Control Check Score						
Best Practices to Enhance Customer Service						
Activity	SAT	AUS	DAL	FTW	PHX	SAN
One Stop Permit Counter	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Customer Surveys (How are we doing)	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
“Post Mortem” Surveys	No	No	Yes	No	No	No
Annual Survey	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	Yes
Quality Control Checks	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Secret Shopper	No	No	Yes	No	No	Yes
Staff Incentive Awards	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes
On-line Customer Customized Reports	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No
Formalize Customer Service Training for Staff	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Customer Service Plan	Yes	No	No	No	No	No
Complaint Hot Line	No	No	Yes	No	No	Yes
Dedicated Call Center	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Formal Program to Document and Analyze Customer Complaints	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	Yes
On-line Tools to Assist Customers Through the Development Process	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
On-Line Training Videos for Customers	No	No	No	No	No	Yes
Information Videos Playing in Lobby	No		No	No	No	Yes
Electronic Agenda for Commission Hearings	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Training Program for Customers Evaluation Form	Yes No	No N/A	No N/A	No	Yes Yes	Yes Yes
Track customer wait and transaction time	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Newsletters	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	Yes
Focus Groups	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes
Focus Group Evaluation Form	No	Yes	No		Yes	No
Homeowner’s Night or Other Extended Hours Program	Yes Wed.	No	No	No	No	Yes Saturday
Pre-Application Screening Process	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Fact Finding Meetings	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Special Services for First Time or Unsophisticated Customers	No	Yes	No	No	No	No
Comprehensive Review of Commercial Plats, Board of Adjustment Cases, and Zoning Cases	Limited	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Cash Bonuses for Employees Offering Exceptional Customer Service	No	Yes	No	No	No	No

## Best Practices to Enhance Customer Service

Activity	SAT	AUS	DAL	FTW	PHX	SAN
City Manager's Office Liaison	No			No	Yes	No
ISO Rating – Residential	05	03	06	08	02	N/A
ISO Rating - Commercial	03	04	06	08	02	N/A

## FY 07 Program Improvements

### Improvements to address delivery of customer service

Title	Cost	Cycle Time	Quality Consist	Cus Serv	New Revenue
Nine Positions added in FY 06	\$560,344	X		X	No
Planner II – Transfer of CDBG Staff (2)	97,326		X	X	No
Dev Serv Eng & Sr Engineer Tech – Transfer of storm water Staff (2)	172,270	X	X	X	No
Bldg Codes Inspectors (15)	1,016,515	X	X	X	No
Sr. Engineering Techs – Platting (4)	156,259	X	X	X	No
Tree Inspectors Senior Tree Inspector (1) Tree Inspector (1)	138,437	X	X	X	No
Outsource Plan Review	100,000	X	X	X	No
Planner II (Zoning Verification Letters)	48,711				No
Administrative Enhancement Fiscal Officer (1) Admin Ass't II Admin Aide (1) – Replace temp	100,198				No
Total	\$2,390,060				No

### Improvements to enhance customer service

Title	Cost	Cycle Time	Quality Consist	Cus Serv	New Revenue
Business Assistance Center Code Consultants (4) Plans Examiner II (1) Customer Service Specialist (1)	\$288,646	X	X	X	\$360,000
Express Team Fire Engineer (1) (team leader) Sr Plans Examiners (5) Storm Water Engineer (1)	312,985				450,000
Fiscal Management Enhancement Sr. Management Analysis (1) Management Analysis (1) Department Systems Aide (1) SPC/Trainer (1)	289,021	X	X	X	No
	\$890,652				\$810,000

Improvements from Frontline Focus Suggestions					
Title	Cost	Cycle Time	Quality Consist	Cus Serv	New Revenue
Addressing Enhancement Building Location Specialist (1) Administrative Aide (1)	57,971	X	X	X	\$77,025
Digitize the Development Process Commercial Plan Storage	\$100,000 (includes 1 <sup>st</sup> yr cost of \$30,000)	X		X	\$135,000
Digitize Plot Plans Submission	\$2,920				
Building Signage	\$1,500			X	No
	\$162,391				\$212,025
IT Improvements					
Title	Cost	Cycle Time	Quality Consist	Cus Serv	New Revenue
Q-Matic Upgrade	\$ 24,000	X		X	No
GeoCortex Software	23,000	X		X	No
Copier/Scanner/Fax for Counter	4,260	X	X	X	No
Wave B – Hansen Support	150,000	X	X	X	No
Hansen Certification	20,000	X	X	X	No
Conference Room Equipment	10,500		X	X	No
Commissioner Laptops & Internet	78,474			X	No
Offsite Bandwidth	6,000	X	X	X	No
Universal Car Mounts	20,250	X	X	X	No
Web Software Enhancement	75,000	X	X	X	No
Wireless Adapters	900	X		X	No
Total	\$412,384.00				
<b>GRAND TOTAL</b>	<b>\$3,855,487</b>				<b>\$1,022,025</b>
<b>Net</b>	<b>\$2,833,462</b>				